

Contributions

SOME OF THE HAPPENINGS AT PHILIPPI

P. J. BROWN

Philippi is the chief city of the eastern portion of Macedonia located ten miles north west of Neapolis its port of entrance. Here was fought the celebrated battle in which Brutus and Cassius were overthrown by Octavius and Antony, B. C. 42. Here, too, Paul first preached the gospel on the continent of Europe, A. D., 52, having been led hither from Troas, by a heavenly vision.

The first convert was a very estimable lady whose name was Lydia, her real home was at Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor where the art of dying purple was particularly cultivated, and even to this day it is said large quantities of scarlet cloth are sent from there to Smyrna sixty miles south west. Our Sister Lydia was connected with this enterprise, had a temporary home at Philippi where she was at the time on business. Paul and his companions were at Philippi several days without any special happenings as far as the record shows. But on the Sabbath, they went out of the city to a riverside "where prayer was wont to be made," and after prayer it appears they preached the gospel, as is often the case, the congregation was composed principally of women. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia so that she attended to the things taught by Paul, and what were those things? She was baptized, and from her act we are forced to conclude that Paul taught baptism. Strange that in the first gospel sermon preached on the European continent baptism should be preached, and strange again that the meeting was held at the riverside, but such was the custom even of the great forerunner John, he preached on the bank of the Jordan and Enon, always where there was plenty of water. While we must guard against the mistake of making baptism our *all*, in the process of conversion, we cannot afford to forget that it is one of the fundamental principles of the doctrines of Christ. See Heb. 6: 1, 2. As one of the fruits of her conversion Lydia shows the principles of good old fashioned hospitality. Religion, if it does not beget liberality, is indeed questionable. She invited the Apostles to make her house their home, which they did for some days, and while they were at prayer a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination by which she could divine many things both good and bad. She correctly declared "Paul and Silas to be the servants of the most high God, who show us the way of Salvation." Paul was grieved at this, and why? Was not her saying true? why then was Paul grieved? Ah, the devil has no right to preach the gospel and it is a source of displeasure to any true Christian to see or hear of the devil or his servants meddling in things belonging to God and his servants. Paul could endure it no longer so he commanded the spirit to come out of her, and he obeyed, but this brought an end to the gain she had brought

to her master and their ire was kindled against Paul and Silas and they were arrested, shamefully beaten, and committed to prison; the jailor had orders to have them thrust into the inner prison, which he did, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Here they were supposed to be securely disposed of; but they prayed and sang praises to God and the other prisoners heard them, not only so, but their prayers were wafted on that midnight air to the ear of God, who with his breath shook the old prison on its very foundation, the stocks fell from their feet and the bands of all the prisoners were loosed, the doors flew open. At this juncture the jailor is aroused from his sleep, and seeing the doors open, the prisoners all in a fair way to escape, which to him, as a Roman officer meant death, he thought the quickest way out was suicide, so he drew his sword, but Paul cried to him with a loud voice, "Do thyself no harm we are all here."

Then a new thought entered his mind, he called for a light and springing into the inner prison which was dark and he came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas and brought them out, that is into his outer prison which included the jailor's home, and said, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" The same old question, the momentous question, the same that the Jews asked on the day of Pentecost, virtually the same that Paul himself asked when on his way to Damascus. Now for the answer, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

But what did he, a Roman officer know about the Lord Jesus Christ? If he had any knowledge whatever of Christ it must have been very vague and indefinite. Here then was a new dilemma; but the ever present remedy was at hand, "they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." And as in the case of Lydia judging from what follows baptism must have been a part of the word of the Lord. It has been claimed that the jailor was baptized in his house and hence was not immersed. Let us examine that question. The jailor did not send for water or order any one to bring water into the house. But he took them the same hour of the night, this latter declaration implies that they went some distance, evidently down to the same place where Lydia was baptized on the Sabbath before, and there he washed their feverish backs, a thing very much needed to ease the pain caused by the stripes they received in a merciless moment the day before. And then the Apostles in turn baptized him and his believing family. Next the jailor brings them into his house again and just as in Lydia's case hospitality is developed, he set meat before them rejoicing in God with all his house. Again it has been claimed that in the household of the jailor and of Lydia there must have been children among those baptized; not at all, for in both cases there is undeniable proof that they all believed. All rejoiced in God, a glorious consummation,

two prominent families converted. No wonder a strong church sprang up at Philippi.

Recapitulation.

1. Paul and Silas were in the inner prison.
2. The jailor sprang in and brought them out.
3. Paul and Silas preached unto the jailor and his family the word of the Lord.
4. The jailor took them the same hour of night and washed their stripes and he and his family were in turn baptized of them.
5. He brought them into his house and set meat before them rejoicing in God with all his house.

Finally what did he do to be saved?

Answer, just what every intelligent person must do.

Yes, Brother Rensch, in this you are right. It does make a difference as to what we do, and how we do it.

Congress, O.

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING

C. H. WITHERBE

By such preaching I mean that which consists in unprepared thought. There has been no specific study of the subject presented, no methodical arrangement of material. The preacher has some thoughts on the text, but he depends largely upon his ability to say something which pertains to the text or subject, as he attempts to preach. It may be that he believes that he is depending upon the Holy Spirit to give him the right thoughts and words, while preaching, and he calls this "freedom in the pulpit," especially if he feels in a good mood. But such kind of preaching is not profitable to intelligent hearers, nor is it very helpful to those who are not particularly intelligent. Besides, it is a great mistake to suppose that the Holy Spirit does much to help such a preacher. The Spirit demands that the preacher shall study hard to know the truth which he preaches and that he shall make such a preparation for he pulpit as will enable him to wisely and most effectually instruct and guide his hearers.

Rev. Dr. Frederick S. Jewell writes as follows in the Living Church: "It is a mistake, characteristic of little learning and large assurance, to suppose that a rambling, off-hand talk, however fluent, is extempore preaching. The free and easy gamboling of the colt in the pasture is a long way off from a trot in the harness, or a finished run in the race-course. Few minds are full enough, fertile enough, methodical enough and self-controlled enough—in short, every way intellectually and linguistically masterful enough, to speak wisely and well impromptu, or even extempore. He who, without a fair share of these pre requisites, attempts such impromptu speaking, supposing it to be true extempore preaching, should remember that it is nowhere recorded that the Lord ever opened the mouth of more than one ass in apt and effective speech." Yes, and even then it was a prodigious miracle.